

CITY OF BELLEVUE
EASTGATE/I-90
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

June 16, 2011
5:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-112

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Bohman, Dave Elliott, Jay Hamlin, Francois Larrivee, Mark Ludtka, Rob Pucher, Rachel Solemsaas, Jim Stanton, Cynthia Welti

MEMBERS ABSENT: Carrie Courter Blanton, Lindy Bruce, Jeffrey Hummer, Tom Perea, John Stokes

OTHERS PRESENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Franz Loewenherz, Transportation Department

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. Call to Order

Co-Chair Larrivee called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

A. May 5, 2011

Motion to approve the minute as submitted was made by Ms. Welti. Second was by Mr. Elliott and the motion carried unanimously.

B. May 19, 2011

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Mr. Ludtka. Second was by Mr. Bohman and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Summary of Public Comments Received on Draft Alternatives

A. June 1, 2011 Open House

B. June 2 to 14, 2011 Online Questionnaire

Co-Chair Larrivee reminded the Committee members that the draft alternatives were presented to the public at two open house events on June 1. Additional feedback was sought through an online survey which was active between June 2 and June 14. The next phase will involve analysis of the alternatives by the staff and the consultants; their work will analyze the alternatives against the Council principles, the evaluation criteria established earlier by the Committee, and environmental considerations.

Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz said following his presentation staff would seek from the Committee direction on moving forward with the next phase of evaluating the alternatives. He explained that the analysis of alternatives phase will occur during July and August while the Committee is in recess. The work will compare the

three build alternatives and the no action alternative with respect to traffic impacts, greenhouse gas emissions, the evaluation criteria developed by the Committee, the Council principles, and various environmental considerations. The evaluation results will be presented to the Committee on September 8. During the months of September and October time will be spent on finalizing a preferred alternative.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Stanton, Mr. Loewenherz said the analysis relative to economics will explore the feasibility of some of the targeted land use changes, specifically the extent to which the market will respond to some of the ideas. Mr. Stanton asked if there will be an element that assesses implementation costs over time, or the feasibility of implementing the alternatives compared one to another. Mr. Loewenherz said some planning level costs will be developed relative to the transportation side. The analysis will not, however, get to the point of fully designing projects.

Mr. Elliott commented that regardless of the outcome of the study, a few years down the road things will change. The plans will have to be flexible. Mr. Loewenherz agreed. He pointed out that the I-90 improvements hold true for all of the build alternatives. Getting the improvements into the vision for the area will position the city to advocate for them.

Turning to the outreach efforts undertaken to date, Mr. Loewenherz stated that the Committee at its May 19 meeting gave the staff direction to proceed toward gauging the community's likes and dislikes. He said one aspect of the process was to assess whether or not any of the alternatives have fatal flaws that would prevent them from further consideration. No such flaws were uncovered. Generally speaking, the public expressed appreciation for being asked for their views.

Commissioner Hamlin said the people he spoke with at the open house were generally there seeking additional information. He said most he interacted with liked Alternative 1, but there were no large outcries against any of the alternatives.

Mr. Elliott said the attendees asked good questions.

Co-Chair Larrivee said the fact that the open houses were not well attended could be taken as a sign that the community is not generally opposed to any of the alternatives.

Mr. Loewenherz said there was a sizeable response to the online questionnaire, and many of the responses were lengthy. There was not, however, any overwhelming statement of preference for a particular alternative, nor any overwhelming negative feedback opposing any of the alternatives. Several commented favorably on the greenway trail extension and several of the transportation projects, most notably TFP-162, Eastgate Way and 156th Avenue SE. Others highlighted projects to the south of I-90 on 150th Avenue SE. One resounding message was that people were troubled by the notion that the auto dealerships could expand and trigger the loss of neighborhood services. Several spoke in favor of the status quo that the no action alternative would bring about, though doing more to enhance the pedestrian, bicycle and transit environments was highlighted by several respondents, as was the need to improve existing conditions.

With regard to Alternative 1, one person was ebullient in applauding the changes it would bring about; a number of others expressed similar sentiments. Several people, however, spoke out against the particular mix of uses envisioned by the alternative.

Mr. Stanton said he was not personally aware of any successful examples of mixed use saddled up to a major interstate freeway. The concept of mixed use is viable in certain settings, but would be challenging to bring about in other settings.

Mr. Loewenherz said the comments regarding Alternative 1 had a strong bent toward a placemaking element and opportunities for people to live, work and play in the same environment. Several respondents expressed the view that the Eastgate/I-90 corridor is not in fact suitable as a residential environment; it is office and should remain as such without being densified.

There was consistency across the board with regard to the need for road improvements and better connectivity.

Commissioner Hamlin said he was in Dallas, Texas, earlier in the year and saw a mixed use development that is located right next to a major freeway. The development includes a transit center and is very successful.

Turning to Alternative 2, Mr. Loewenherz said the respondents who favored the alternative favored the notion of building on what the area already does well, which is office. At the opposite end of the spectrum, one individual commented that there is too much office space already in the corridor and that adding more would only exacerbate the transportation network. The road improvements, ped-bike improvements and transit improvements included in the alternative were all favorably received.

With regard to Alternative 3, there were a number of respondents who indicated appreciation for the fact that the plan is well balanced in terms of land use and transportation systems. Those favoring the alternative noted that targeted improvements is the preferable approach. The respondents very clearly voiced opposition to the notion of allowing a big box retailer to locate in the corridor, but supported the notion of enhancing the urban village concept in Factoria and keeping it where it is. There was a general call for more roadway improvements.

Mr. Loewenherz said an additional outreach idea was finalized on June 5. Over the years there has been much talk about the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway and there is the sense that there should be a targeted engagement with the cycling community along those lines. In a collaborative effort with the Cascade Bicycle Club, a ride will be hosted in the corridor the evening of July 26. He said an email invitation would be mailed out to the Committee members.

4. Next Phase – Alternatives Evaluation

Mr. Loewenherz sought direction from the Committee with regard to proceeding with evaluation of the alternatives as defined at the meeting on May 19, and returning to the Committee on September 8 with an assessment of the alternatives.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Welti, Mr. Loewenherz said the traffic demand modeling work will be predicated on the square footage assumptions each alternative includes. The square footage assumptions will be translated into number of employees and number of residents to help inform the impacts at the various intersections in the corridor.

Mr. Stanton noted that in Alternative 2 the element of the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway is on the north side of the freeway instead of the south side. Alternatives 2 and 3 include landscaping and storm enhancements in the interchange, which neither Alternative 1 or the no action alternative has. It is more than likely that the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway will be on the south side of the freeway, and it would seem that all of the alternatives should include some enhancements in the interchange. He said he supported

having alternatives with a range of alternatives but questioned why there should be common components.

Mr. Ludtka concurred. He said he would like to see specific differences attached to each component, like what difference it would make to have the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway on one side of the freeway or the other, and what difference it would make to enhance the interchange versus not making the enhancement. Mr. Loewenherz allowed that the assessments of some elements will be more qualitative than others. The economic assessments will be fairly defined, and the benefits of landscaping improvements can be calculated in that they will improve storm water runoff. The criteria by which the alternatives will be evaluated are those adopted by the Committee as well as the Council principles.

Co-Chair Hamlin noted that because the alignment for the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail has not been solidified, it makes sense to include the trail on the north side of the freeway as one option and on the south side of the freeway as a separate option. The point is to get the most diverse data possible, which will later be selectively combined into a single preferred alternative.

There was agreement that none of the alternatives needed to be revised based on the comments from the open house and the online survey.

Mr. Elliott noted that because the work of the CAC is supposed to wrap up by the end of the year, absent having more than one meeting per month, the Committee would have essentially only three meetings following the summer break. He suggested that it would be helpful to have an occasional short meeting during the summer months just to keep the Committee members up to speed. Mr. Loewenherz said a number of different persons, both staff and consultants, will be involved in the analysis work and it would not be fruitful to deliver the work product piecemeal and unpolished. He allowed that more than one meeting per month may be necessary, especially in September and October.

Mr. Stanton said he trusted that in the fall the Committee will be presented with the pieces and parts that go with the various alternatives, and will be given the latitude to have a robust conversation about how to put the pieces together. Mr. Loewenherz said staff and the consultants have no desire to come back to the Committee seeking a signature on the bottom line approving the work done. The mix and match exercise following the analysis phase will be critical to developing a workable plan.

5. Public Comment

Mr. Jack McCullough, 701 5th Avenue, Suite 7220, Seattle, spoke on behalf of Beacon Capital Partnership. He thanked the Committee for its work. He said over the summer months he intends to look at the financial feasibility of the redevelopment issue from the private side. All of the office space that exists in the Eastgate/I-90 corridor was constructed on vacant land. The idea of tearing down the Lincoln development, which has 30 years of useful life left, will be a new approach for the area. He said his analysis will include a tighter look at the transit-oriented development and pedestrian connections. With regard to the property just to the northwest of the park and ride is part of the Sunset development, which is owned by Beacon. The opportunities associated with that site will also be studied over the summer.

6. Other Business or Direction – None

7. Adjourn

Co-Chair Larrivee adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.